



OFFICE OF THE ASSESSOR

PAUL D. PETERSEN
Assessor

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Commission on Appellate Court Appointments
1501 W. Washington, Suite 221
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing you to recommend Maricopa County Attorney William Montgomery for the vacancy on the Arizona Supreme Court. I have a more multi-faceted view of him than most others who know him. I have known Bill for nearly 20 years. I originally met him when he was a young prosecutor and I was freshly out of law school defending the son of a family friend on a felony case. Bill had no reason to listen to me more than any other defense counsel, and I was certainly green at that time. Yet, he showed my client and me incredible grace by taking the time to hear all the facts of that case, and ended up making a reasonable, but fair, plea offer. I knew at that point that he was someone I could trust and who was honorable, based on his limited professional interaction with me then.

Fast forward a number of years, and I found myself working in the Maricopa County Assessor's office. During that timeframe the Board of Supervisors and other county-wide elected officials found themselves at odds with the County Attorney and Sheriff. This caused significant disruption to county government, and resulted in a crisis of leadership at the county level. Fortunately, the county attorney at the center of that controversy decided to resign to run for Attorney General. This meant that the Maricopa County Attorney's office would get new leadership. When I found out that Bill intended on running for the position of county attorney, I was one of the first to publicly support him, as I knew he not only had the *bona fides* for the position, but more importantly, would bring needed stability and principled leadership back to the office. And in fact, once Bill was elected, the long-simmering feuds, disharmony, and mistrust essentially dissipated. Bill was able to restore and further foster the necessary trust between elected officials and departments that had been lost under the previous administration.

A few years after Bill was elected as the Maricopa County Attorney, I had the opportunity and honor to be appointed to (and later elected twice) as the Maricopa County Assessor. The role of the Assessor is to locate, identify, and value all real and personal property within Maricopa County. This is done to make sure the property tax role is equalized and fair for all county taxpayers. In this role specifically, my office interacts on a daily basis with the County Attorneys' office because we are essentially the County's experts on property valuation --- we set the initial values and then give advice

and opinions regarding those values if a property owner appeals those values. The reason I bring this up, in relation to Bill, is that, quite unusually, I exercise more control and decision-making regarding legal strategy and case management than previous Assessors, primarily because I am an attorney myself. There have been times when I have not agreed with advice given by the county attorney's office, and have asked for further clarification from them. Bill has always been gracious enough to listen to my point of view first, before responding and explaining his position. And while we don't always end up on the same page, he has swayed my initial opinion based on his initial act of listening before arguing his position. More importantly, when we have disagreed, he was always willing to re-evaluate the position of his office, based on additional facts we presented to him, or based on other evidence and/or legal arguments he had not previously considered. I find this fact to be refreshing: a powerful county attorney who has no real duty or obligation to take into consideration legal arguments from another elected official, after all, his duty as county attorney is to provide legal advice to the Board of Supervisors and other elected county officials like myself. I know from personal experience that other county attorneys, both inside and outside Maricopa County, have not been as gracious or accommodating as Bill has.

I strongly believe that Bill has all the qualities necessary to be a good justice. He is smart. He is gracious. He is open-minded. He works well with others. He is a man of fidelity. He has a firm belief system. He is a veteran. He is a man of character. For these reasons, and because I believe in him as a mentor, peer, and friend, Arizona's judicial system would be well-served and complemented greatly by having William Montgomery sit on the Arizona State Supreme Court.

Sincerely,

Paul D. Petersen
Maricopa County Assessor